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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, Washington, D. C.

MARCH-APRIL 1957

FOOD CONSUMPTION OF FAMILIES TODAY

Today, large numbers of families can and do spend more than ever before to buy more food and more kinds of food. As a result, educational programs that deal with foods and nutrition have possibilities of wider scope than ever before.

U. S. FAMILIES—THEIR FOOD PATTERN

Housekeeping families of 2 or more persons in the United States spent an average of \$28.50 for food in one week, according to the latest nationwide food consumption survey made in the spring of 1955. Taking the survey week as typical, the average family, after deducting for State and Federal income taxes, would have set aside about one-third of its money income for food. Adding the \$2.70 worth of food from the home farm or garden or received as gift or pay, the total money value of food came to more than \$31 for the week. With the number in the family averaging 3.6 persons, food for a day had a value of \$1.25 per person. The major portion of this food was eaten at home, but meals and snacks away from home in the week accounted for \$5.00 of the \$28.50 the family spent for food.

In selecting food to prepare at home the average homemaker used the largest portion (36 cents) of her food dollar for meat, poultry, fish, and eggs, and nearly half as much (15 cents) for milk and milk products other than butter. About 19 cents went for potatoes and other vegetables and fruits, 10 cents for flour, cereals, bread, and other baked goods, and the remaining 20 cents for fats, sweets, and all other foods.

The quantities of food per person for the week provided by the average selection included among other things—4 1/8 pounds of meat, poultry, and fish, of which a third was beef and a fourth pork; 4 1/2 quarts of whole milk or its equivalent in milk products (in terms of calcium content); 2 pounds of potatoes; 4 pounds of other vegetables and 4 pounds of fruits; 1 1/4 pounds of sugars and sweets; nearly a pound of fats; 1 1/2 pounds of bread, over 1/2 pound of other commercial baked goods, and nearly 2 pounds of flour and other cereal products. (The per person

In this issue Mollie Orshansky of the Institute of Home Economics, Agricultural Research Service, presents an interpretation of the consumption data published in the first five reports of a Household Food Consumption Survey made in the spring of 1955. The survey was made by USDA's Agricultural Research and Agricultural Marketing Services. Reports of the survey, which consist largely of statistical tables, are now being released. (A list of the reports now available or in press is enclosed.)

In a later issue, NCN will present an appraisal of the nutrient content of family food supplies. That appraisal will be an interpretation of data from reports 6 to 10 of the series.

The Department of Agriculture has conducted household food consumption surveys at intervals as a part of its program of research on family diets and on the marketing and consumption of farm products. The 1955 survey is the most comprehensive yet undertaken; it covers a national probability sample of 6,000 housekeeping households of one or more persons.

averages have been computed to provide for 21 meals a week, counting meals away from home as equal to meals at home.)

In terms of quantities of food to use in serving family meals these figures add up to a generous diet. For example, 4 1/8 pounds per person would provide, on the average, enough to serve meat, poultry, or fish more than once on most days of the week. Such consumption reflects the fact that in terms of price and income relationship 1955 was a relatively good year for most families.

DIFFERENCES IN FOOD CONSUMPTION

The figures in the preceding section and others in the series of reports recently released by the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture give an account of how much and how well U. S. families are eating. Although the general picture is

abundant family food supplies, the averages conceal variation in family food practices. For example, families of 2 or more, the average money value of food used at home in the week came to \$7.50 per person or more than a fourth of the families the value of food was less than \$6 per person and in an equal number it came to \$10 or more.

City markets offer a wide variety of foods in different forms of processing, and in different price ranges. Families show a good deal of individuality in their selections of foods, and in the amount they spend for them. This diversity reflects likes and dislikes of family members for particular foods, while some represents differences of knowledge about nutrition requirements and economic position. Factors such as these make family-to-family variability difficult to measure or to predict.

On the other hand when families are grouped by their size, by household size, or their place of residence, it is possible to detect some systematic variation in food consumption. Such data help us understand the market for food and estimate the effect of changes in the population and distribution of income. They also serve a special purpose in public health programs for education in nutrition and food conservation by identifying the population groups who could benefit most from such programs and showing the food habits of these groups, which are the point of departure for health education.

The data published in the survey reports make it possible to study differences in the diet pattern by the degree of urbanization and the region in which the family lives, and by income related to the income available to the family. To a limited degree, differences among families of different income levels.

Urbanization. Perhaps the most marked diversities in food consumption are between families living in cities and on farms. Farm families generally have more food (measured in calories), chiefly because of the large amount of food supplied by the home farm or garden. Food used at home is valued at prices the family would normally pay for it; when they represent about 40 percent of all the food used at home and away by the farm family. Although the urban share, it is considerably less than it used to be. The proportion of food home-produced varied among families, but virtually every family had some.

Value of food. For the survey week the total value of food used by farm families averaged \$29.25, or \$7.31 per person. By contrast the urban average was \$32.75, or \$8.19 per person. With the smaller size of city families, the average value of food used by city families came to \$9.40 per person. Families classified as rural nonfarm—i.e., living in small communities of less than 2,500 persons and outside the city limits around cities of 50,000 or more but not on a farm—had food valued at \$7.60 a person in the week, or 83 cents less than city families but somewhat more than

the average for those on farms. Many rural nonfarm families produce some food for themselves, although much less than the average farm family.

Food produced by the families for their own use has been valued at prices paid for similar items purchased by survey families in the same region-urbanization group. Since many rural families customarily buy some foods, such as eggs or fruits and vegetables, from a neighbor or other local outlet, the prices they report are less than the regular retail prices usually paid by most city families. For example, the North Central farm families that bought eggs to use in the survey week paid only 35 cents a dozen compared with 41 cents reported by rural nonfarm and 50 cents by city families in the same region. If the food of the farm and other rural families was valued at prices commonly paid in city markets, the money value of their food would undoubtedly be greater than that of city families.

Farm families spent only half as much for food as the urban families and the rural nonfarm 80 percent as much. However, since rural families generally have lower incomes, the share of average money income going for food was nearly the same for the three groups, about one-third.

There was considerably more eating out among city than among rural families: Some food was purchased and eaten away from home in 10 out of 12 city families, but in only 9 out of 12 rural nonfarm families and 8 out of 12 farm families. Furthermore, the city family that did eat away from home spent nearly one and one-half times as much as the rural nonfarm family and more than twice as much as the farm.

Food quantities. Types and quantities of foods consumed by urban and rural families are of interest. Combining the foods into broad groups, we see that the most striking difference is the relatively larger role of milk, grains, and sugars in the farm family diet and the lesser relative importance of meat, as the figures below show:

Food group	Urban Rural nonfarm Farm		
	Quantity per person (1 week)		
Meat, poultry, fish.....(lb.)....	4.4	3.8	3.8
Eggs.....(doz.)....	.6	.6	.7
Vegetables, fruits, potatoes.....(lb.)....	10.2	9.6	9.6
Dark-green and deep-yellow vegetables..(lb.)....	.6	.4	.4
Citrus fruits ¹(qt.)....	.6	.5	.4
Milk, cream, cheese ²(qt.)....	4.3	4.4	5.2
Fats, oils.....(lb.)....	.8	.9	1.1
Sugars, sweets.....(lb.)....	1.1	1.3	1.8
Flour, cereals, baked goods ³(lb.)....	2.6	3.3	3.9

¹In terms of single-strength juice.

²In terms of fluid whole milk on the basis of calcium content.

³In terms of flour and dry cereal content.

city families, as we see, had nearly a quart less per person of milk and milk products (measured in calcium equivalent) than farm families. But the difference was not only quantity. The farm families, who as a group home-produced 68 percent of their milk, used a larger proportion in original form and less as processed milks or cheese than families who generally bought their milk. For example, milk and cream made up 83 percent of the total milk products used by farm families, and processed milks and cheese 12 percent, compared with 76 percent and 18 percent respectively for city families.

Turning to meat, we find urban families averaging about a pound more per person than farm families, and there is a difference in kind as well as in amount. City families, farm and nonfarm alike, used pork during the week—an average of about a pound a person—but city families were more likely to use some beef or poultry in addition, as the following figures indicate:

Item	Urban	Rural nonfarm	Farm
	Households using (percent)		
.....	91	93	91
.....	94	85	79
ry.....	60	50	50

farm families, with their home food production and preservation, had more of their vegetables fresh or home-canned or home-frozen and less commercially processed than the nonfarm families.

The rural families not only had considerably more grain products in their diets, but they also had a larger proportion as cereals or as flour used in home baking than the city families who bought more bread and other baked goods.

Even this abbreviated look at the food pattern reveals that farm families are likely to have more food in total value than the nonfarm, although it is of lower money value. Quantities of milk, eggs, fats, sugars, sweets, and fruits are larger in farm menus; quantities of meat, fruits, and vegetables are smaller.

Region. With the U. S. covering so large a geographic area, we would expect to find regional variation in food patterns, if only because of differences in the kinds of food produced. We might, perhaps, also anticipate some differences lingering on to remind us of the ethnic groups that have historically settled the various parts of the country.

The food survey reports show that there are indeed regional differences, but generally they are slight and often greater than those among families of different income groups within a region. Of the four broad regions identified in this survey—Northeast, North Central, South, and West—it could be said that the South was more different from the other regions than they were from each other.

Food expenditures were lower in the South. For the total spent for food at home and away from home by families of 2 or more persons, the averages for a week in spring 1955 were: For the Northeast and the West, \$32; for the North Central, \$30; and for the South, \$23. Relatively less of the southern food dollar went for food away from home. Since the southern families were larger, differences per person were relatively greater.

On the whole, North Central families used more milk and milk products, more meat, potatoes, fresh or home-preserved fruits, and commercial baked goods than other families but less fresh or home-processed vegetables. In the South, families had considerably more flour and cereals and fresh vegetables than in other regions, more fats and sugars, and less milk, meat, and commercial baked goods.

Because the division of the population between urban and rural is not the same in all parts of our country, many of the seemingly regional differences are actually differences between urban and rural food habits.

Food expenditure patterns. Using the division of the money value of food as a convenient device for comparing consumption patterns, we find, for food used at home, that urban families, no matter what region they live in, divide their food dollar in much the same fashion. The same is true for rural nonfarm and farm families, so that the distributions for all U. S. families apply equally well to a region. In other words, on the average, the current food pattern of the urban family in one region is much like that in another, but it does differ from the farm family in its own region. In turn, however, the farm family pattern in any one of these broad regions is much like that of farm families elsewhere.

Patterns for the average U. S. farm and nonfarm family in any region then, may be summarized as follows:

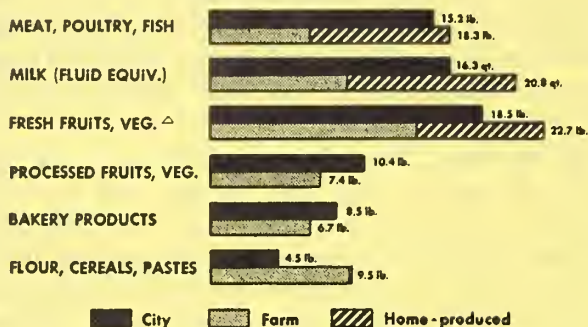
Food group	Urban	Rural nonfarm	Farm
	Money value of food (percent)		
Meat, poultry, fish, eggs.....	37	34	32
Vegetables, fruits, potatoes.....	19	19	19
Milk, cream, cheese.....	14	15	19
Fats, oils, sugars.....	7	9	10
Flour, cereals, baked goods.....	10	11	10
Beverages.....	9	8	6
Other.....	4	4	4
Total.....	100	100	100

These figures show, as did the per person quantities quoted earlier, the greater emphasis on meat and similar foods in the urban meals than in the farm meals and the

FOOD CONSUMPTION: CITY, FARM

North Central Region, Spring 1955

Quantity per family in a week*



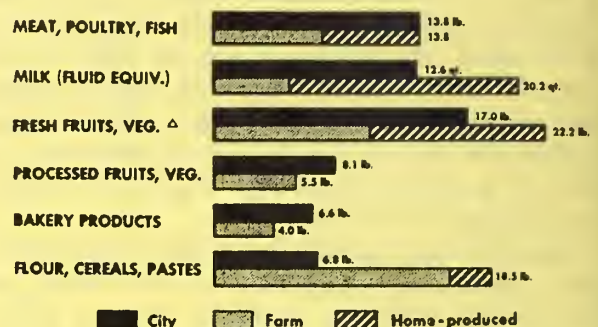
● MEDIAN INCOME CLASS Δ EXCLUDES POTATOES

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FIG. 1 NEG. 56(10)-347 AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

FOOD CONSUMPTION: CITY, FARM

Southern Region, Spring 1955

Quantity per family in a week*



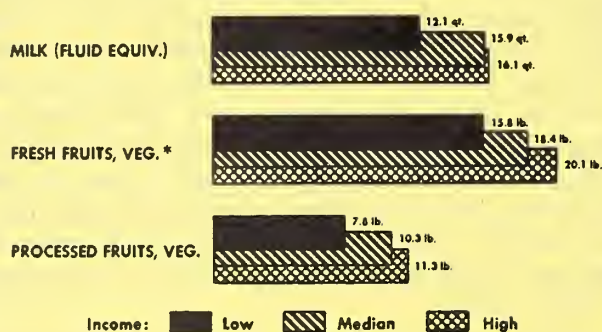
● MEDIAN INCOME CLASS Δ EXCLUDES POTATOES

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FIG. 2. NEG. 56(10)-348 AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

INCOME AND FOOD CONSUMPTION

Per City Family, Spring 1955

Food at home in a week



Δ EXCLUDES POTATOES

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FIG. 3. NEG. 56(10)351 AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

INCOME AND FOOD CONSUMPTION

Per City Family, Spring 1955

Food at home in a week

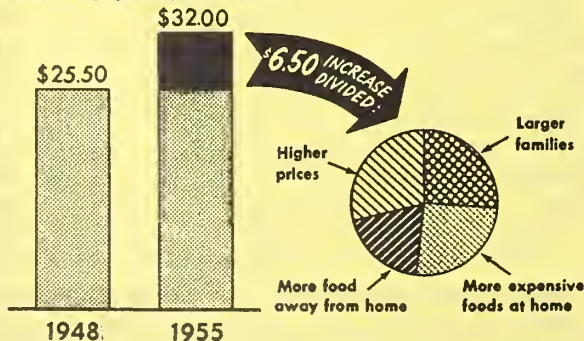


Income: Low Median High

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FIG. 4. NEG. 56(10)352 AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

CHANGES IN URBAN FOOD EXPENDITURES

Average family spending in a week:

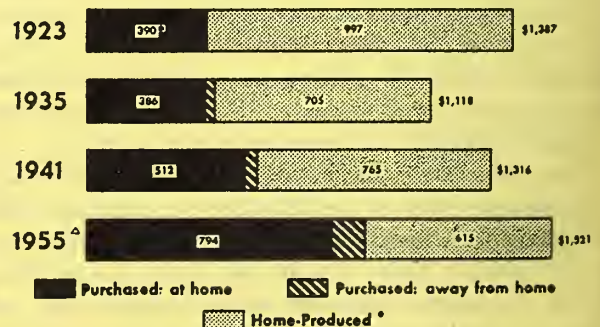


U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FIG. 5. NEG. 56(10)354 AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

MONEY VALUE OF FOOD

Farm Families

Dollars per year (1955 prices)

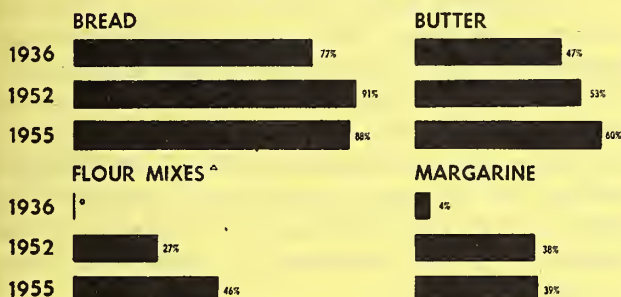


● INCLUDES AWAY FROM HOME Δ PRELIMINARY: SURVEY WEEK, ANNUAL RATE ● RETAIL VALUE

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FIG. 6. NEG. 56(10)341 AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

FOODS PURCHASED

By Farm Families, North Central Region
FAMILIES BUYING IN A WEEK



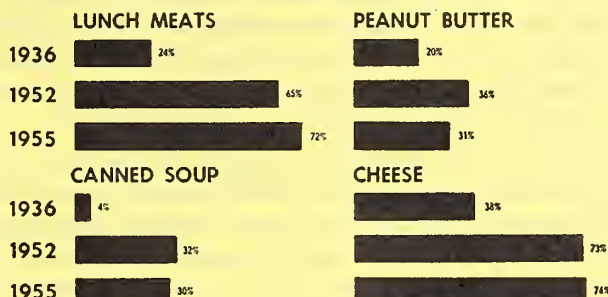
[△] CAKE, PANCAKE, SUFFIN, ETC.

[○] DATA NOT AVAILABLE

FIG. 7. NEG. 57(3)356

FOODS PURCHASED

By Farm Families, North Central Region
FAMILIES BUYING IN A WEEK



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FIG. 8. NEG. 57(3)357

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

FOODS PURCHASED

By Farm Families, North Central Region
FAMILIES BUYING IN A WEEK

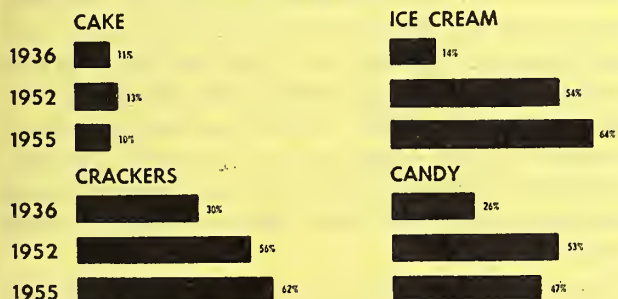


FIG. 9. NEG. 57(3)358

Charts may be obtained from:

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2. Enclose *check or money order* payable to the "Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture."

Photographic prints are:

- 8 x 10 inches \$0.75 each.
- 11 x 14 inches \$1.55 each.

lesser relative importance of milk and milk products in urban diets. Although the farm and nonfarm families, as shown earlier, used different amounts of fruits and vegetables, and grain products, we see now that both groups allotted the same proportion of their food dollar to such items.

Some regional differences remain, to be sure, even when comparisons are made only among urban or among farm groups. In part they are explained by differences in income. Farm families in the South, for example, because their income averaged much lower than that of farm families in other regions, had considerably lower food expenditures (about \$4.50 less in the week per family). Home-produced food was also a little less in the South (about \$1.25 per family), although it made a larger percentage contribution to the food supply than in other regions.

Food quantities. It is not possible here to summarize all the region-urbanization differences (and similarities)

revealed in this survey. Figures 1 and 2 bring together some of the findings for city and farm families in the North Central and Southern regions. Since family spending is known to be related to the economic level of the community as well as that of the family itself, we have selected families at the same relative income position for comparison. That is, the charts show average consumption of a number of foods by families in the median-income class for each region-urbanization group. These median-income classes (for money income in 1954 after income taxes) were:

	North Central	South
Urban	\$4,000-\$4,999	\$3,000-\$3,999
Farm	3,000- 3,999	1,000- 1,999

The charts show that North Central families used more meat, milk, fruits, vegetables, and bakery products than their southern counterparts, but less flour and cereals. Greater use of grain products and more home baking has

traditionally been a feature of the southern diet. Other differences between the two regions were that more fats and sugars were used in the South, and larger amounts of potatoes were used by North Central families. It should be noted that urban households compared in both regions averaged about 3.6 persons, but farm households shown for the North Central region averaged only 4 persons compared with $4\frac{1}{4}$ in the south.

Income. The nature of the relationship between a family's total spendable income and the amount it spends for food is well known. On the average, families increase the amount they spend for food as income increases, but at a proportionately slower rate so that the percent going for food is less for high-income families. We know, too, that some of this increased spending goes for larger quantities of many foods, and much of it goes for increased services in the form of foods requiring less preparation by the homemaker and also to meals purchased away from home. The recent survey confirms these facts and provides quantitative measures of them.

Because it is not complicated by home-produced food, the relationship between income and family food consumption is more direct for urban than for farm families.

Food expenditures. On the average, food expenditures of city families of 2 or more were about \$3.00 a week (or \$150 a year) higher for each \$1,000 that income was higher. For farm families the average difference for each \$1,000 of income was \$2.00 a week. These figures represent the average effect of adding \$1,000 to family income. However, at low incomes considerably more of an income increase goes for food. For example, a low-income city family with \$1,000 more to spend would use 28 percent of the extra money for food, but a high-income family receiving \$1,000 more would spend only 5 percent of it on additional food purchases.

For purposes of discussion, we have selected three groups of city families—a low-income group (\$2,000-\$2,999), the median-income group (\$4,000-\$4,999), and a high one (\$6,000-\$7,999). For city families in the median-income group the food purchased in the survey week represented an annual rate of 37 percent of family income, compared with 48 percent of income in the low-income group and only 29 percent for the high-income families. The average food cost for the week was \$23.25 per low-income family, \$31.60 for a family in the median group, and \$37.50 per high-income family. High-income families used nearly one-fourth of their food dollars for meals and other food away from home, and the low-income families only one-eighth.

These are average patterns—but some families with low incomes spent as much or more for food as some with high incomes. For example, 1 out of 4 city families with low

incomes served food at home valued at \$9 or more per person, while 1 out of 4 of the high-income families used food valued at less than \$7 per person.

Food quantities. Figures 3 and 4 show some of the differences in the average diets of low- and high-income city families. The higher income families purchased larger quantities of most foods—more than enough to make up for their larger family size. The larger amounts of baked goods and smaller amounts of flour and cereals in the high-income families, like the greater share of their money spent for eating out, typify the shift from services provided by the homemaker to those performed for her as more money becomes available.

Although there are considerable differences in the quantities of specific foods used and the money outlay for them by families at different incomes, the division of the food dollar among the major food groups does not change. Figure 3, for example, shows the high-income family buying over 4 pounds more fresh fruits and vegetables than the low-income family, yet in both groups 9 cents of each food dollar went for these foods. Similarly, figure 4 shows the family with high income using 3 pounds more meat, poultry, and fish than the low-income family, yet in each case these foods took 33 cents of the food dollar. In both groups, as well as for the median-income families, the division of the food dollar is for all practical purposes the same as that given earlier for all urban families. This finding, noted in earlier studies as well, is of interest to those who help families that spend different amounts for food plan food budgets.

Food choices. Families with more money to spend often chose more costly foods within a food group. For example, the low-income families paid, on the average, 56 cents a pound for meat, while the median- and high-income families paid 62 and 66 cents respectively. The low-income families had less beef than the other families, and when using beef were less likely to choose steak and other relatively expensive cuts. Only 37 percent of the meat of the low-income families was beef, compared with 43 percent for those with median and high incomes. Steak (other than round) appeared on the menu during the week in 24 percent of the low-income families, and in 37 and 44 percent respectively of the median- and high-income households.

Although the amount of fats and oils used by households increased relatively little with income, the average price paid per pound increased. For the three groups of city families considered here, the price per pound went from 34 cents at the low incomes to 37 at the median and 40 cents at the high. This meant, among other things, a drop in the percent of households using lard from 27 percent at low incomes to 10 percent at the high, and a rise in the

percent using salad or cooking oils from 18 to 33. Families with more money to spend were more likely to have butter and less likely to have only margarine as the following percents of urban households using each show:

Item	Low-income	Median-income	High-income
	Percent of households using		
Any table fat.....	97	99	99
Butter only.....	30	34	41
Butter and margarine.....	21	27	27
Margarine only.....	46	38	31

This pattern for use of table fats, however, is more pronounced for North Central and Northeast city families than for those in the South and West. In the latter regions the families generally were less likely to use butter and more likely to use margarine than in the rest of the country.

Processed foods, too, were more likely to appear on the shopping lists of families with higher incomes, as illustrated by the percent of urban households using commercially canned or frozen fruits and vegetables:

Food group	Low-income	Median-income	High-income
	Percent of households using		
Frozen fruits and vegetables.....	26	43	55
Canned fruits and vegetables.....	86	91	90
Fruit and vegetable juices (fresh, canned, or frozen).....	55	72	78

Income differences in food consumption among rural farm and nonfarm families, not discussed here, are similar to those illustrated for urban families. Because rural families produce some of their food the differences in food consumption with change in income are not quite so marked as for city families, although probably greater than many persons believe. Producing food at home often means using more total food rather than buying less. After a certain point—which differs with family income and with the kinds of food produced—increased home production brings little reduction in food expense.

Family size. The only data as yet available from the survey for families of different sizes are averages of total cost of food at home and away.

Comparing food expenditures of large and small families with about the same income shows differences similar to those observed between low- and high-income families. The food budget takes a larger slice of family funds in the larger families but dollarwise each member gets less. We illustrate this for city families in the median class used

above (\$4,000-\$4,999). As the figures below show, families of 6 were spending an average of nearly half their income for food, while families of 2 were spending only a fourth, yet the large families had less than two-thirds as much food, dollarwise, for each person:

Number in family	Share of income going to food	Total value of food per person
	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Dollars</i>
2.....	26	11.54
3.....	35	10.30
4.....	39	8.74
5.....	46	8.20
6.....	48	7.10

No doubt it is possible to prepare food more economically for a large family than a small, and there is likely to be less waste. The fact that large families more often include young children means they may need less of some foods per person than small families. However, when additional data are available by family size, they will undoubtedly show as in other surveys that the differences are not all explained in this fashion. The quantities used per person of most foods, particularly those relatively high in price, are considerably less in large households than in small. This would follow from the fact that per capita income is lower in large households.

Variation in food consumption of farm families with family size follows much the same pattern as in city families, with the added factor that food purchases decrease more than home production, as shown by the figures for U. S. farm families at the median-income class.

In this income class the average person in a family of 5 had only half as much purchased food (in dollar terms) but over two-thirds as much home-produced as a person in a family of 2. Extending home production is apparently one way the family with a large number to feed keeps food consumption from dropping so low as restricted purchases would otherwise make necessary.

CONSUMPTION TRENDS

With both income and prices much higher than they used to be there has been a change in family food consumption. Certainly families spend more for food today. In 1955, the average food expense for a week by the U. S. family was about three times that in 1942. (Food prices, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, rose about 81 percent in this period.) City families in 1955 were spending about one-fourth more for food than in 1948 (fig. 5); although food prices were only about 7 percent higher.

Part of the increased expenditure may be attributed to larger average family size, but much of it is simply a shift towards more expensive types of foods.

Income effect. Higher incomes—the median income of city families was 36 percent higher in 1955 than in 1948 although the general retail price level had risen only about 11 percent—made it possible for consumers to spend more for food away from home and serve more expensive types of foods at home, such as prepared and partially prepared foods and more costly cuts of meat. In 1955, for example, more than 1 out of 3 city families ate steak (other than round) at least once in the survey week, compared with only 1 out of 4 in 1948. Similarly, in 1955 about 19 percent of all food expenditures in the week were for food away from home, compared with 16 percent in 1948. About 28 percent of the expense for food at home in 1955 went for certain prepared and partially prepared foods, compared with 26 percent in 1948.

The trend toward increased purchases is not limited to city families. Farm families, too, though still getting a substantial amount of food from the home farm or garden, also buy more now than they once did. Over a 30-year period (fig. 6) farm families in this country more than doubled their expenditures for food (after allowing for increase in prices) while decreasing their home production about a third. Thus the purchased share of total food used by the farm family rose from only 28 percent in 1923 to 60 percent in 1955. The increase represented increased outlay for both food away from home and food at home. For example, in the North Central region farm families in 1955 purchased two-thirds of the fruits and vegetables they used in the survey week compared with less than one-third in the earlier year.

Commercially prepared foods. Both the farm and the city homemaker are turning more and more to foods with a higher degree of processing—to shorten and ease the work of preparing meals for the family. As related above, the city housewife in spring 1955 used 28 cents of each dollar spent for food eaten at home for such processed foods. The farm housewife, who got some of the family food from the home farm or garden, was able to allot 35 cents of her purchased food dollar for such items.

This trend towards buying ready-prepared items is illustrated for North Central farm families for a few common convenient foods often used for quick meals (figs. 7, 8, 9).

Nowadays items such as bread, butter or margarine, lunch meats, crackers, and cheese, and ice cream are found on most farm family shopping lists as well as on those of city families.

Changing food selection. The long-run general upgrading of the family food supply is evidenced by consumption of larger quantities of many foods. Compared with the depression days of 1936 and the wartime days of spring 1942, U. S. families now use more milk, more meat, and more fruits and vegetables. The $4\frac{1}{2}$ quarts of milk (calcium equivalent) consumed in a week per person in the average household in 1955 is over $\frac{1}{4}$ quart more than in 1942, and over 1 quart more than in 1936. By contrast, families now use less grain products, with a larger share coming into the home as commercial baked goods, and fewer potatoes. Another point of interest is that in 1955 a city family with very low income had as much meat, poultry, or fish per person as the high-income city family of 1942 or 1948.

Change in amounts and types of food used has occurred for both farm and nonfarm families and at all income levels. There are still differences between the food patterns of low- and high-income families, but for most families, whatever their income, there is a wider variety of foods. Many foods that once signified special occasions have now become commonplace. For example in 1942, poultry was served in only 26 percent of the urban households in the survey week; even among city families with incomes of \$5,000-\$9,999, only 54 percent had any. In 1955 the percent of city families using poultry was more than 55 percent at every income level except for families with less than \$1,000. Changes in price relationships as well as in family income have affected consumption. From 1942 to 1955 the average price for chicken, as reported by urban families in the two surveys, increased by about one-half, but the average price paid for steak more than doubled.

The trend toward increased purchases and greater quantities of many important foods will undoubtedly continue. Increased incomes together with the growing percent of housewives who work outside the home will undoubtedly maintain the trend towards purchase of foods that are quick and easy to prepare. The wide opportunity for choice that homemakers now have because of the larger incomes and the greater variety of foods on the market provides an increasing area for improving and extending consumer education.